

## House Republican Press Release

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### New Teen License Laws Take Effect Oct. 1



*By State Rep. Toni Boucher, R-143<sup>rd</sup>, Wilton, Norwalk*

One public concern that frequently attracts legislative attention is a large number of motor vehicle crashes involving young people, particularly fatal accidents. This year's legislative session was no exception.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), motor vehicle traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for every age from 3 to 33. For 2002, the agency tallied 44,065 total U.S. traffic fatalities. Of those, 6,327 were youths aged 16-20, often involving alcohol.

Consequently, the Connecticut legislature again this year reexamined state laws on child-restraint systems and new driver restrictions. As in prior years, the issue produced a controversial debate, weighing parental responsibility against government regulation of personal behavior.

The result is a series of motor vehicle laws, about which many citizens may be unaware.

To address the large number of teen car crashes, new legislation requires 16- and 17-year olds learning to drive under learner's permits to have a minimum of 20, instead of eight, hours of behind-the-wheel instruction with a parent or instructor. It also prohibits 16- or 17-year old licensed drivers, with few exceptions, from driving between midnight and 5:00 a. m.

Previously, during the first three months a 16- or 17-year old holds a driver's license, a young person could transport no more than one passenger who must be either a (1) parent or legal guardian who is at least age 25 and a licensed driver, (2) person who is at least age 20 and has held an unsuspended driver's license for at least the preceding four years, or (3) licensed driving instructor.

The new measure, instead allows a new driver to transport during the first three months of licensure either (1) his parents or legal guardian, regardless of age as long as one is a licensed driver, or (2) one passenger only who must be either a licensed driving instructor or someone at least age 20 with an unsuspended driver's license for the four preceding years.

**To help summarize the state's requirements, following is timeline:**

A 16 or 17 year old must receive a Learner's Permit. Once they have done so they must:

- Complete 20 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction. This training can come from a combination of:

(a) a full course of drivers education at school.

(b) training at a licensed drivers' school.

(c) home training conducted by a parent, grandparent, foster parent, legal guardian, or spouse. If the person has none of the previously listed family members a stepparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt could give the training. The trainer must sign a statement attesting that they gave the hours of training they did. The trainer must be a license holder for at least four years and have not had their license suspended within the last four years.

- Complete a Safe Driving Practices course of at least 8 hours long. A minimum of 4 hours of the course must include drug and alcohol issues including the affects they have on driving and the penalties for drug and alcohol related motor vehicle violations.
- Pass an examination given by the DMV that includes an on-the-road skills test as well as a test that proves knowledge of laws concerning motor vehicles. In order to take this test the person must hold their Learner's Permit for at least 180 days.

**Restrictions on 16 & 17 Year-old Drivers:**

- Not permitted to drive between Midnight and 5:00am, except to and/or from work, school, or a religious activity. Medically necessary travel is also permitted.
- Not permitted to use a mobile phone, even with a hands-free device.
- Not permitted to use any mobile electronic device, this includes but is not limited to pagers, lap top computers, digital cameras, game playing devices, DVD players, and text-message sending devices. Permitted devices are installed audio equipment & navigational equipment.
- Not permitted to transport more passengers than there are seat belts in a vehicle.
- Not permitted to operate a vehicle that a "Public Passenger Transportation Permit" is necessary for, or a van pool vehicle.
- If license has motorcycle endorsement, no passengers permitted until 6 months after the date obtaining the license.
- For the first 3 months after obtaining the license the only passengers permitted are parents and legal guardians (provided one has a drivers license) OR one passenger that is either a licensed driving instructor or a person 25 years of age that has had a drivers license for at least 4 years and not had it suspended in the last 4 years.
- For months 3 through 6 after obtaining the license the driver is able to transport those listed above and additional members of their immediate family.

All these restrictions and additional training requirements are Effective October 1, 2005.

*These laws are similar to those adopted in surrounding states. More information will be available from the state Department of Motor Vehicles or my office at:*

[Toni.Boucher@cga.ct.gov](mailto:Toni.Boucher@cga.ct.gov)